



# Maricopa County Animal Care & Control



## *Introducing A New Dog to a Resident Dog*

The goals when introducing a new dog to another family dog are: (1) to prevent fear or aggressive reactions; (2) to allow normal canine greeting behaviors, such as sniffing; (3) to allow some agonistic behaviors such as low-level growls and threatening postures (which are normal during initial meetings as the dogs assess each other); (4) to keep these behaviors from escalating into aggression; (5) to have the dogs associate good things with each other's presence; and (6) to avoid interactive or physical punishment.

### ***Eliciting and reinforcing appropriate behavior***

- Introduce the dogs in a neutral location to minimize the chances of the resident dog viewing the newcomer as a territorial intruder.
- Design interactions to help both dogs expect good things to happen in each other's presence. When they greet and sniff each other, talk to them in a happy, friendly tone of voice, offering both a few tidbits (resident dog first).
- Allow only brief interactions initially, as prolonged ones sometimes escalate to provoke fear or aggression.
- If one dog reacts appropriately submissive to challenges from the other dog, re-

inforce the submissive behavior even if it is from the resident dog.

- If there is more than one resident dog, introduce each to the new dog individually to prevent them from ganging up on the newcomer.

### ***Preventing or minimizing inappropriate behavior ("mistakes")***

- Watch carefully for body postures that indicate increasing tension (raised hackles, the baring of teeth, deep growls, a stiff-legged gait, or a prolonged stare), and interrupt the interaction by calling the dogs away from each other or engaging them in alternative behaviors.
- Also watch for dominant body postures that probably indicate one dog is attempting to establish social dominance over the other (direct eye contact, chin or neck of one dog over shoulders of the other, or one dog placing front feet over shoulders of the other). If the other dog accepts these postures, there may be no problem, but if not, threatening behavior or aggression can result. Consider interrupting the interaction by calling the dogs away from each other or engaging them in alternative behaviors.
- Avoid tight restraint, such as holding one dog in your arms or pulling tightly on leashes during initial interactions, as this

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sometimes makes threatening behavior or aggression more likely. If dogs are on leash, try to keep the leashes loose or let the dogs drag them.

- Avoid having the dogs together in a small space, such as a car or hallway, until they have become comfortable with each other.
- Supervise interactions at home, and do not allow dogs to be alone together until they consistently demonstrate friendly behaviors with each other for at least a week.
- Allow a natural dominance hierarchy to develop if one dog is able to control important resources such as food, toys, or space. Support the dominant dog's status by allowing this to occur even if the resident dog is not dominant.
- For a while, start a "jolly routine" whenever the dogs approach each other, even if no aggressive or threatening postures are exhibited. This classically conditions the association of good things with each other's appearance.
- Go slow with introductions. Don't expect that the dogs can be together continuously from the first day. If they don't do well at first, separate them except during managed interactions. Taking things slowly is worth it if fighting problems can be developed.

## ***Minimizing the use of punishment & using punishment correctly when necessary***

- The goal in introductions is to establish

a positive relationship, so punishment should be minimized. If interactions turn threatening or a fight breaks out, remote punishment is better than interactive punishment. Try a loud noise, such as an air horn, an ultrasonic device, or water gun. This should be used only to interrupt the current interaction; it should not be used repeatedly.

- If supervised interactions consistently result in fearful, threatening, or aggressive behavior, either the introduction was too abrupt or this is not a problem prevention situation, but one that requires problem resolution.

## ***Providing for the dog's behavioral needs or meeting the puppy's developmental needs***

- Maintain the routine of the resident dog(s) as much as possible. Keep the time and location of feeding, exercise, play, and sleep the same as before the new dog.
- Give each dog individual play and social time.
- Make sure the new dog has sufficient opportunity to bond to the owner, without having to compete with the resident dog for attention.
- Support whatever dominance hierarchy the dogs establish for themselves.
- Don't undermine this hierarchy by preventing the dominant dog from asserting its position or by taking a resource (such as a toy) away from the dog who was able to gain possession and returning it to the other dog.